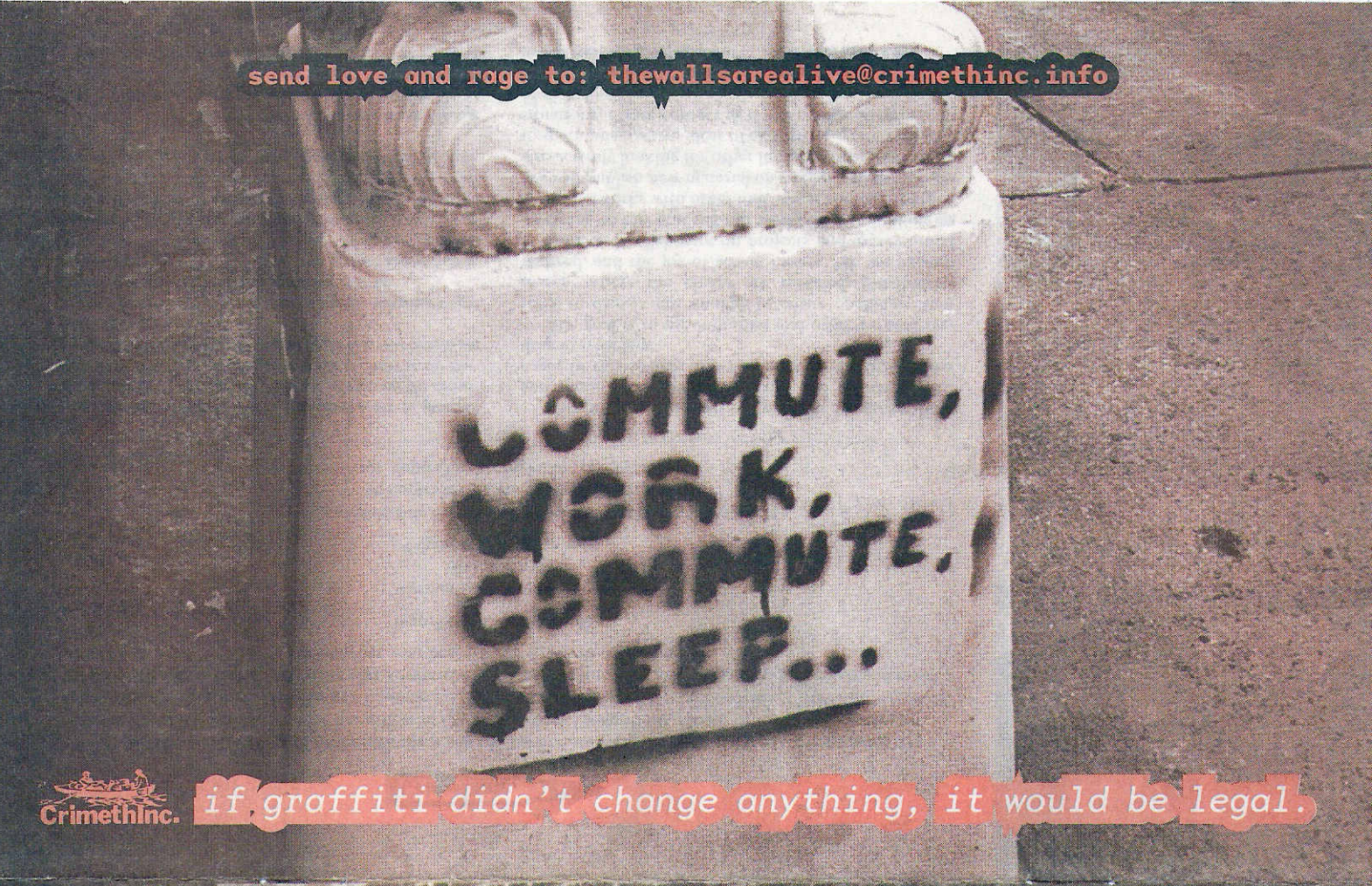
VISIT…

send love and rage to: thewallsarealive@crimethinc.info



CrimethInc.

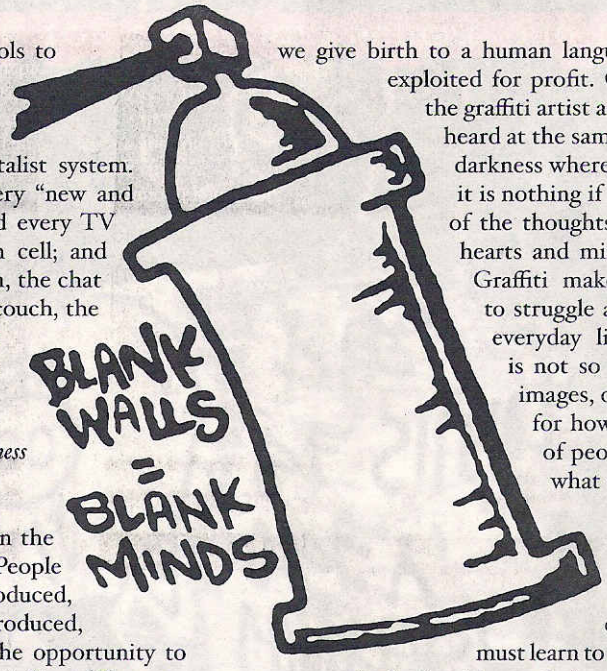
if graffiti didn't change anything, it would be legal.

the walls are alive!

free

a how-to graffiti guide for those who scheme and those who dream

From the indoctrination camps known as schools to the warehouses of industry and incarceration, we are a society of mutes. Human communication is constantly drowned beneath the deafening racket of an inhuman and insane corporate capitalist system. Behind every advertisement—a baton; behind every "new and improved" product—a canister of tear gas; behind every TV show—a tank; behind every newspaper—a prison cell; and behind every textbook—a graveyard. The classroom, the chat room, the bedroom, the church, the psychiatrist's couch, the cash register, the answering machine, the office, the bar, the jail—these are all spaces in which we are confronted with our incapacity to speak.



But perhaps the most glaring expression of our voicelessness is in the streets.

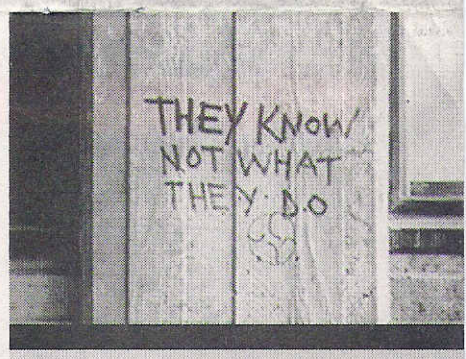
More and more the streets of our cities speak in the monolithic, inhuman brutality of the suburbs. People bustle about like ants confined within mass-produced, lifeless and drab metal boxes amongst mass-produced, lifeless and drab buildings. We rarely even have the opportunity to pretend to acknowledge one another with our robotic lies of "how are you doing?" and "pretty well."

The streets speak the language of money, and so our official options are either to speak this language as well, or shut our fucking mouths . . .

Graffiti is a means to begin speaking, and to begin liberating space for human use. By writing and creating art on privately-owned buildings, we give birth to a human language that cannot be owned or exploited for profit. Graffiti is criminalized because the graffiti artist and the capitalist cannot both be heard at the same time. Graffiti speaks from the darkness where there are no witnesses, and yet it is nothing if not visible. Graffiti vocalizes all of the thoughts and images locked inside our hearts and minds by an incarcerated society. Graffiti makes coherent our frantic urges to struggle against the strangulation of our everyday lives. The brilliance of graffiti is not so much in the specific words or images, or in how many people see them for how long, but more in the process of people coming together, relearning what they want to say and saying it.

The crew of graffiti artists must each love life—and each other—enough to help keep one another out of jail. They must learn to be close enough to communicate clearly: in whispers, in just a few seconds, and in code. And so our speaking takes many forms, from the passionate shouts on the wall to the gentle reassurances we share when we have successfully acted and evaded the grasp of the police.

If you had a wall and plenty of paint . . .
what would you say?



CrimethInc.

This zine and a vast variety of other incindiary and topical literature can be obtained from us for a song. The CrimethInc. Workers' Collective has offices in Olympia, Salem, Greensboro, Moab, Brookings, Bloomington, Yellow Springs, Amherst, Des Moines, Cuernavaca, Vitoria, Victoria, Sundbyberg, Bordeaux, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Kodiak, Mendoza, Gallup, Mexican Hat, Oventic, Providence, Atlanta, Gent, San Sebastian, Vieques and many others, but your best bet for now is to contact us at:

http://www.crimethinc.com

CrimethInc. Home Office
PO Box 1963
Olympia WA 98507-1963

A single copy of this zine is available for free (donations appreciated).
50 copies are $8 including postage.
100 copies are $15 including postage.

Wherever the master speaks, the slaves learn to speak in code. We speak to one another through scrawls on the devastated earth and through anonymous shouts down secret tunnels. We speak through masks and on walls that no one will see 'til morning.

Sometimes we can't afford to let you know what we've got in mind. But now, we're letting you in on a secret:

[whisper] This world of slaves and masters is going up in flames, soon. The conflagration is coming - like a wall of flames coming from the sky, from the hills, from underground, from all sides. We've seen the master's ever-changing faces, and we've seen slavery's new shapes and new names. But this time, it's all going to burn... and from the ashes a new world will be born. [end whisper]

That's it. That's the secret. We're letting you know because you're invited to do what you can to bring on the fire. We've already begun. We lit the fuses in our hearts . . .

We call ourselves ***firestarters*** . . .

Our project is to push you over the imaginary lines and out of the (self-constructed and self-decorated) cages of this society. But only on one condition—you drag us with you.

The goal is to use literature and other printed material to disrupt just enough to create openings—moments—where the chains are revealed, possibilities realized, and the joy of action ensues. We are excited to share and collaborate on projects and totally bored by trying to buy and sell our work. We are looking to create networks with other individuals and distributors. We will publish new material on a regular basis. We are also actively looking for other literature/materials ready to spark imaginative ideas of all sorts to ignite everyday situations. Please contact us if you're interested in (con or dis)tributing.

firestarterpress@ziplip.com

firestarter

Many of us have beautiful things to say but are continuously drowned out and stepped on. We need each other to speak the voice of struggle to the fullest.

Again, we are not experts. We are the agitated and the agitators, sharing our knowledge with you so we can begin to break free together; and begin to transfer the screams within our hearts to poetry upon the walls. We will continue to take back our streets; and we encourage you to do the same with yours. We will be watching over you, gaining inspiration from your poetry upon the walls, and kissing you ever so gently upon your head—finding hope within each other to stay afloat in this sea of hopelessness. Lest we forget, amidst the ever-increasing motorization, militarization, privatization, and sterilization of our spaces, the walls are alive!

The images in this pamphlet are from Palestine, Northern Ireland, Australia, Canada, England, Italy, and the States. We encourage you to photocopy this pamphlet, steal its text and images, share it with your friends, and cover your streets with love and rage.

People who follow authority are dangerous motherfuckers. More crimes are committed in the name of obedience than disobedience. It's always the people who do what they're told who end up carrying out genocides and gas attacks.

So just to be on the safe side I've stopped doing what I'm told, ever. That way you can always be sure.

-Banksy

Completed in the spring of 2002, more than 4,000 copies of The Walls Are Alive *were published and distributed by its creators, most of whom are now firestarter (press and distro). This publication was produced, using the original text and pamphlet as a model and source, by CrimethInc., who in turn have printed 15,000 of these, one of which you are reading right now.*

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disclaimer

We are streetwriters. We are not particularly special. We are not professionals. You wouldn't know that we are streetwriters if you met us. We are a lot like you. We are just people with anger and passion and hope and vision, just like you. And we create graffiti as a means of speaking and acting towards a free society—the kind of society that you and I, and we, could actually live in together.

We write on walls with paint where we live—in rather mid-sized cities with universities. We have not yet done graffiti on water towers or skyscrapers or police cars. We have made plenty of mistakes and we learn as we go. We know only know so much, but what we know we are excited to share.

We work in groups and work alone. Some prefer to work alone because of the ease of going out on your own time, the increased freedom of movement, and the lack of someone to blame if you or someone else gets caught. Others prefer groups for lookouts, decoys, and companionship. This pamphlet focuses mostly on group work.

We are sharing this publication with you because if you want to create graffiti as well, we would like you to do an excellent job. If you are going to create graffiti, we hope that it is brilliant, bold, strategic, and enjoyable.

And most importantly . . . It's not so much that we want you to create graffiti, because, you understand, if you create graffiti, you are breaking the law. And we obviously can't actually want you to break the law—that would be silly . . .

But if you're going to break the law anyway, you might as well try not to get caught.

preparation

There are a few things you should do before an action to keep yourself and the people you're working with (they should be people you know and trust) safe . . . and, to enjoy yourself and not get caught.

1. Map out the area you will be working in and have an escape route to a strategic location (one that would be okay to go to if followed).

2. *Things to take with you:*

- A change of clothes: to change into if seen
- Latex gloves: to keep your fingers evidence free—the more durable, the better
- Good running shoes
- And of course permanent markers, spray paint, stencils, and anything else you desire to beautify the streets with

Things not to take with you:

- Radical material/propaganda (i.e. flyers, zines, pamphlets, stickers, buttons, patches: things that are good not to have if caught and searched)
- Identification: this one is your call. It's good not to have on you because if you are caught you have the option of giving the pigs false information, but it may give them more reason to harass ya.

3. *Discuss your plan of action with your crew:*

- Decide which institutions you plan to target and what your mark may be for each. Though this can be fun to decide after you're out, you need to think of efficiency. Time is key. If you're out for a long period of time, you are more likely to be caught. Don't let yourself get too comfortable, even if you are at the Nike megastore you drive your bike past everyday. Being comfortable in illegal situations is never a good thing. Just be alert and ready to act; anything can happen.

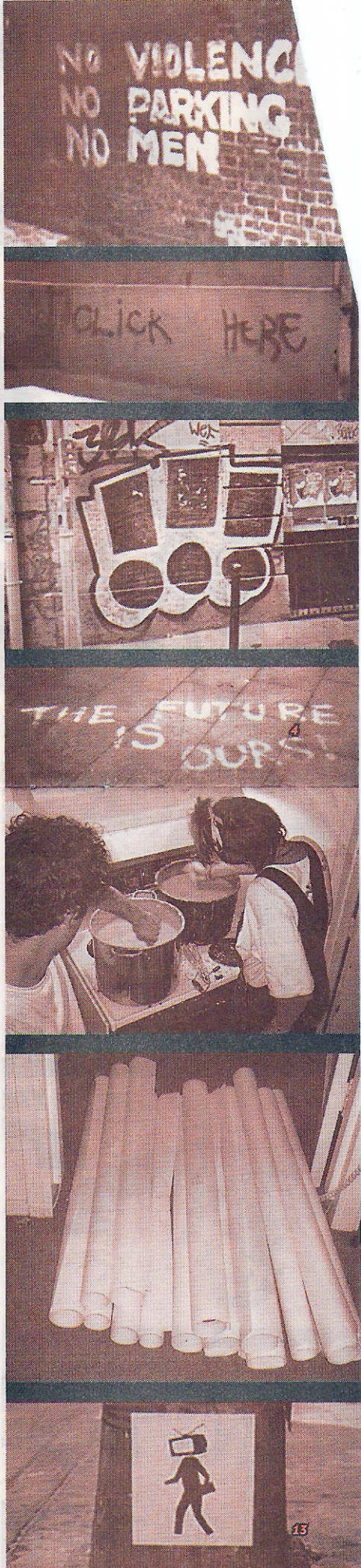
- Try to start small and make your way up to bigger projects. That way, if you are caught earlier on that night, it's likely your artwork hasn't been noticed by your interrogators and you will only be questioned about what you were seen doing.

mouth, whereas wallpaper adhesive tends to be thinner and more consistent and can be dispensed out of much smaller holes. We recommend bottled water containers and squeezable dish washing soap containers with pop-up nozzles, respectively. It can also be helpful to have something to smooth the posters up on the wall—you can use something general like a window-washing squeegee from a gas station, or get a plastic wallpaper smoother **(B)** made for just this purpose and available at the same stores you can get wallpaper adhesive from, often on the same shelf.

Technique: For every wheatpaster, there is a unique technique for applying posters to walls. Your goals should be quickness, thoroughness, and remaining undetected. The method we favor is to 1) apply the paste to the back of the poster while it is on the ground, 2) place the now sticky poster on the wall, 3) smooth it out, removing all air bubbles and crinkles, 4) apply a small amount of paste to the edges and corners to make it more difficult to remove. Applying the paste while the poster is on the ground keeps you less conspicuous and allows a more even coating of paste to be applied, ensuring a more durable and longer lasting poster. Be sure to make and bring a lot of paste, it is better to have too much than too little. And, as with all art, improvisation is key.

Design: Good design is key to getting your message across, and good design is easy if you stick to a few simple guidelines. Remember that most people will see these from a distance, so make the headline HUGE and legible and use images that are high in contrast and equally large. Be sure the message comes across without having to read the fine print. It might be smart to include a paragraph or so of smaller print expanding your statement for the casually interested; also, it's a good idea to include some type of contact info for those who become motivated by your actions, usually a web page or several work very well.

Poster Production: The bigger the poster the better, and Kinko's can help you with this; most Kinko's have special copy machines that can blow up Letter size or Tabloid size paper to 18"x24", or even bigger. These machines usually do not have counters and use the honor system to charge for the copies. Also, contrary to what you may think, the thinner the paper the better, as it will be harder to remove. We also recommend rolling and rubber-banding each poster individually for quicker deployment in the field. *(see photo to right)*



wheatpasting

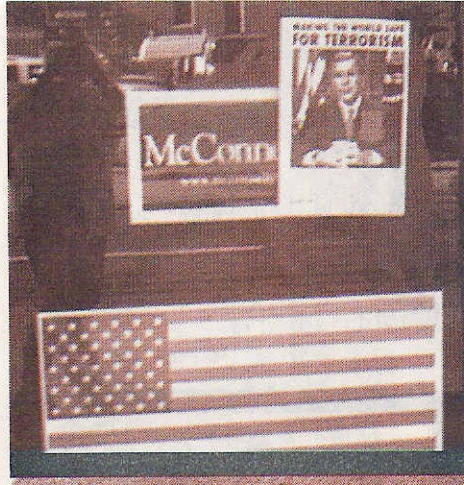
Wheatpasting is another technique for redecorating your town—and also sharing your perspective with your neighbors and passing along some information and ideas not reflected on the nightly news. It consists of creating a poster, photocopying it and then 'gluing' the posters to walls using wheatpaste (or some other liquid adhesive) in a permanent manner. Wheatpasting often can be very effective in communicating your ideas: posters usually attract more attention than graffiti and since you mass-produce them, you can have very specific, complex messages at a variety of locations with minimal effort and risk. A well coordinated group could paste up thirty 3x4 foot posters all over town in one night and instantly make their perspective and presence known.

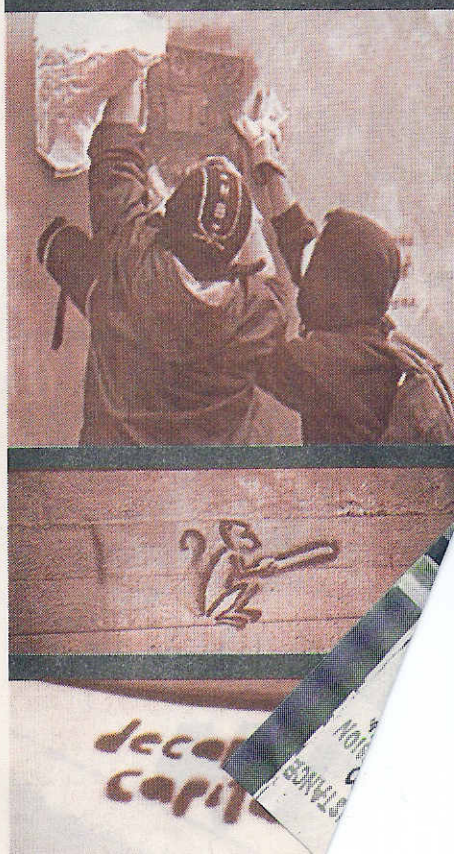
Making Paste: *There are two schools of paste making: the old school actually uses flour and water and the new uses wallpaper adhesive. Both are effective, but we certainly lean toward the new school—less prep time, less room for mistakes in preparation, and easier application. The key advantage to the old school is that you probably already have all the ingredients at your disposal without having to go to the store. Try both for yourself and see what works best.*

- *Wheat Paste:* Pour one cup of flour into one and a half cups of water, stir to remove all lumps and heat to a boil until it thickens. Add more water until it turns into a thick, clearish goop. Cook on low heat for at least half an hour, being careful not to burn it. Some people add a little sugar or corn starch for added voodoo stickiness. The lesson here is: don't be afraid to experiment.

- *Wallpaper Adhesive:* This can be purchased (or otherwise obtained) suspicion-free at any home improvement or paint store, such as Home Depot. They come in either pre-mixed buckets of various sizes or in boxes of unmixed powder **(A)** and are relatively inexpensive, the unmixed variety costing about $2.50 for about two gallons of paste. As opposed to wheat paste, this stuff mixes very easily and requires hardly any precision or experience. Some brands have variations that advertise being "easy to remove"—*you don't want these!* Get the most heavy-duty stuff they have.

Tools: You will need something to apply the paste to the poster—your hands will do just fine, but some prefer big, old paint brushes to speed up the process. You will also need a container to hold and possibly dispense the paste—wheat paste tends to be thicker, so be sure your container has a wide





- Assign roles—it may be helpful to decide who wants to do what for each run that evening.

Lookouts:
It's ideal to have two (one looking down either direction of the street).

Artists:
Alternate! Let everyone express his or her creativity, concerns, and ideas.

Getaway Plan:
Whether you go by bike, foot, or utilize public transportation, everyone should feel comfortable and able to escape by the means you decide to use. Your means should also be quick, accessible and allow you to go where the cops can't (so a bike may just be your best bet). Also discuss where to meet when on the run—at your bikes, a location in the area, someone's home. . . How long do you plan to be out? The faster your outing, the sooner you'll be out of the range of the cops.

- Since you'll probably be running away from the persyn who spotted you (though it is good to walk if you are a lookout, and were not seen as being involved) and towards your transportation/agreed upon getaway location, it would be good to find a place to hide after you're a ways from your last target (and the persyn following you). This location could be a well-crowded area, a dumpster, a bike trail, an underground tunnel, a bush, or anywhere you won't be noticed. Here, you can leave all evidence of your involvement in the illegal act and also change your appearance with different clothing and/or hairstyles/hats.

- Also decide whether everyone is going to stay together (choose a nearby location to meet and then all go to the get-away location) or just go straight to the destination for escapees and wait until everyone arrives. It may be good if this location has a telephone that could be called by anyone that may get arrested (assuming that at least one persyn gets away).

- Who you can contact in case shit goes down: housemates, friends, someone you may have mentioned to before the outing that you could put yourself in an arrestable situation, and/or lawyers (a cell phone may be useful).

Find out about local laws and know your rights—key if caught by the authorities.

4. Create action names or a way to communicate without using words. Try using a call that can be made and heard by all participants: barking, howling, party sounds (be creative).

5. And it's best not to go on an empty stomach. You may want to dumpster some goodies en route to your chosen destination.

HAVE FUN!

stencil instructions

A beginners guide to painting with stencils

- Draw or copy your image on a piece of paper.
- Glue the paper onto a bit of card using good glue.
- Cut straight through the drawing and card at the same time using a very sharp knife. Snap off blades are the best. The sharper your knife, the better your stencil looks.
- Ideal card should be about 1.5mm thick—much fatter and it's too difficult and boring to cut through. Any thinner and it gets sloppy quick.
- Find an unassuming piece of card as a folder to hold your stencil in and leave the house before you think of something more comfortable you could be doing.
- Get a small roll of tape and pre-tear small strips ready to attach stencil to the wall.
- Shake and test can of paint before you leave. Matte finish comes out better and dries quicker.
- Apply paint sparingly.
- Move around the city quickly.
- Pace yourself and repeat as often as you feel inadequate and no one listens to a word you say.

post-action regroup

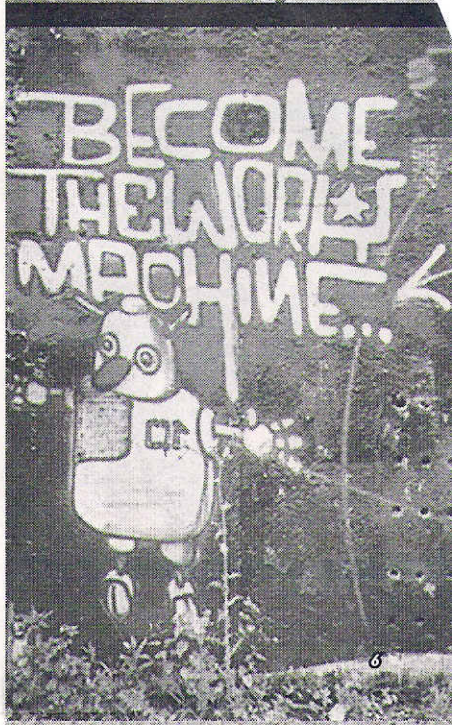
If you avoided the law, get together soon afterward while ideas are still fresh in your mind and discuss failures, successes, and ways it could have gone smoother.

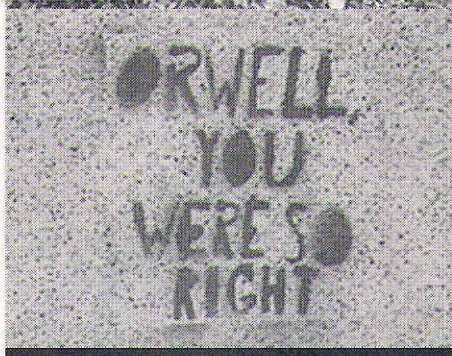
- If you want, write down stuff, so next time it will be better. And if you want to help others, compile everything you learned in an anonymous pamphlet or flyer.
- Ensure everyone is comforted after a high-stress night. Understand and discuss each other's fears, angers, joys, and doubts. Remember: comfort the distressed, distress the comfortable!
- Tell no one of your streetwriting adventures.
- If you get caught, work on getting out of the situation. Then regroup and do the above stuff, especially support. Jail can be a terrifying, depressing, humiliating, belittling experience. Comfort, learn, and continue . . .

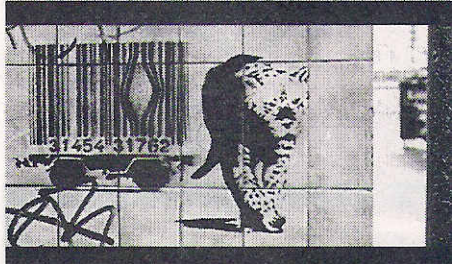
Streetwriters . . . we need you!

If you are caught and arrested:

Be quiet. You may have to spend several hours or a night in jail. Possible charges include "vandalism," "destruction of government (or private) property," or whatever else the various county or city police have in their law books. In all likelihood, it's just a misdemeanor. If you have a strong case to prove "reasonable doubt," fight it if you can. Otherwise, possible punishments include community service (usually 20-40 hours), a fine, paying only the costs of court (usually around $100), or a day or two in jail (highly unlikely). Oftentimes, you (juveniles, especially) can strike a deal where you agree to a punishment and your record is unscathed. Punishment also depends on your prior record and the court location (many large, urban areas have tough laws against graffiti). If you're really worried, do some research into it.







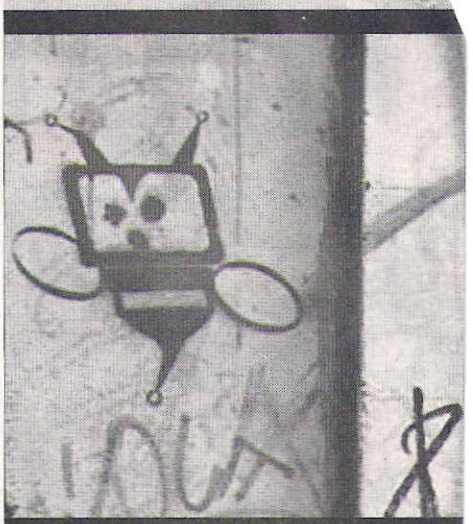
your escape

You never want to plan to get caught, but it may be in your best interest to assume it is very possible and likely if you're not cautious (or even if you are). Be aware that if the police catch you running, they can tack on another charge against you.

Remember, before you even encounter the police, you should try to discard or hide as much incriminating stuff as you can (paint, gloves, stencils, paint-covered clothes). In fact the best and quickest thing to discard is the paint can tips. It sounds silly, but if the cops find a can on you without a tip, they will have a very difficult time pressing charges and proving your guilt in court. If you had no way of dispensing the paint, then how could you be guilty? A Louisiana state court judge told one of us of a case where a working-class man, simply trying to feed himself, was caught fishing in a no-fishing zone. The man's guilt was obvious, but he walked free because the arresting officer, when questioned, never actually saw the hook on the man's fishing line.

What to do if stopped/questioned/searched by the pigs

- Have a good excuse as to why you are wherever you may be, what you're doing, why you're out at that hour (if late) . . .
- You may want to give them good (believable) false information about yourself. Have a city, zip code and area code memorized just in case.
- Be completely calm. Remember: you didn't do anything wrong.
- Be ignorant about why you were chosen to be fucked with.
- They will try to get you to talk, but don't hesitate to ask lots-o-questions: "Am I under arrest?" "May I ask why you're searching me?" "Why do you need my information?" "Why do you need a photograph?" "Do I smell bacon?"
- A lighter and spraypaint work wonders on approaching cops!



mapping it out

We are so isolated in this society; we hardly ever realize we are engaging with specific spaces. We need to re-teach each other to notice where we are, how we exist in relation to our environment, and how we hope to re-shape the worlds we live in. This is important not only because it will help keep us safe when out on graffiti missions, but in all facets of our lives.

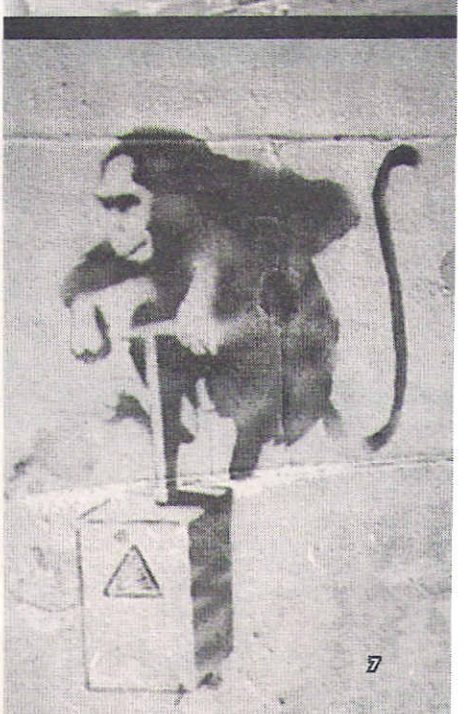
Some things to ask yourself about your surroundings:

- What are the quickest get-away routes?
- Where are there large concentrations of people?

  a. During the day (to see your artwork)

  b. At night (in the form of cars, cops, drunks, homeless folks) and will they get you in trouble or provide cover?
- Who are the major fuckers in the area and how do they defend their property against creative expression?
- What streets lead where and how do they connect to each other?
- Are there people who might give you refuge in their homes if you have to flee from the law?
- Where can you go that the police can't go with you (and/or see you)?
- How are different sections of town used (i.e. are there lots of shoppers, businessmen, students, drinkers, etc.)?
- What sections of town are important to the ruling elites and why? (For example: is there a neighborhood slated for demolition to build a freeway?)

All of this information, and more, will make your efforts more effective. Often there is at least one persyn who might have a sense of answers to these questions, but it is really important to democratize the information. **We can never be too educated; the police and corporations we are struggling against always know plenty about "their" territory.**



strategy

This section aims to present strategic recommendations for maximizing the impact of graffiti and to provoke clever and new ways of putting it up.

Picking your targets

For jamming: Corporate America leave behind their message? Have fun with it. Play with existing messages or surroundings. Make people laugh. Make your space interactive. Create dialogue on the walls. Oftentimes the message is the medium.

For large freestanding messages: Scout out spots that are highly visible and well-traveled in the daytime and deserted at nighttime (office buildings, highways, overpasses, stadiums, freight trains, oil tankers, tractor trailers, tanks, helicopters, hot-air balloons, etc.).

For short, repetitive messages and stencils: High-traffic pedestrian areas seem to be the most effective: sidewalks, walls, benches, and whatever else is on the street.

The plan of action

Is the two lookouts and one painter routine getting boring? Tired of the tactic of acting normal and blending in to arouse less suspicion? Certain spots hard to get to? Below are several strategies—not yet attempted by us, but tried successfully by friends and others. Emulate them if you like, but we offer them up more to incite you to try something crafty and ingenious.

- Navigate your way through a business park or to a skyscraper rooftop with a 3-piece suit and a briefcase full of cans.
- Wear your dirtiest clothes and stumble through the streets at night with a shopping cart full of empty aluminum cans, and several hidden spraypaint cans.
- Create a large, multi-paneled stencil and try putting it up and painting it.
- In the afternoon, on a busy city street, rope off a sidewalk area with yellow tape, don an orange reflector vest and a hardhat, post "wet paint" signs, and begin work with paint rollers.

to the streets!

- Be quick. Be bold, but stay alert! Complacency is death.
- Nighttime provides best cover. Always have one or two lookouts. Look for pedestrians and people in cars and in windows. All are potential cops or whistleblowers.
- Act nonchalant. Have bikes or skateboards. Maybe cigarettes.
- Stay aware of your location. Roam, but know where you are.
- Know when to stop. Just because no one has seen you, doesn't mean you should carry on. Otherwise, you'll always be painting until you are caught and have to run away night after night.
- Do stencils or one or two large wall scrawls—not both. Once a wall scrawl is up, it will be noticed soon enough by the cops no matter how deserted the area seems. If doing both small repetitive stuff (stencils) and larger, bolder stuff in the same night, save the large stuff for last. People are more likely to report bigger stuff, so once you do big stuff, get out of the area.
- If can is almost empty, don't shake it (makes a loud noise which blows your cover). Drop it and change cans or retire for the night. The amount of paint wasted isn't worth a night in jail.

Stencils

- Be quick and plenty (repetitive)
- Different tips (nozzles) increase flow and speed the process.[1]
- Works best if one persyn holds stencil while one spraypaints (both wear gloves) and one or two serve as lookouts.
- Keep the can in your pocket or a bag; carry the stencil in a notebook, binder, or bag.

[1] Acquire a package of these tips at hardware stores or skate shops. Play around with the different tips before you hit the streets. You will be amazed at the speed with which some of the tips dispense paint. Also, for wall scrawls, the tips often produce stylistic effects that make your piece exciting and more artistic than you thought you could be.

Wall Scrawls

- Maximum-flow tips are also helpful here for both speed and aesthetics.
- Try using a snap-on spraypaint trigger to reduce hand fatigue.
- Writing with really fat markers is also fun.
- Using a paintbrush may increase boldness of message, but takes longer.
- Just because a spot is hard to reach does not mean your piece will stay up longer.
- Works best if one persyn writes (consistent handwriting), but 2 or more allow you to finish sooner. You should always keep at least one lookout. Look in every direction.
- It may be necessary to roller paint behind your message first to increase its boldness.